

ORIGINS

by Guillem Bosch

I met Irene and Jaume for the first time in the classrooms and corridors of the ETSAV, probably one day in September of 1994, just a few days after boarding this immense ship called Architecture. At that time, we ignored its complex but indispensable navigation charts and knew nothing about the ship's routes nor the islands where it would stop. We just had the illusion of sailing, and it was enough.

For those happy coincidences of life, we immediately formed a group of classmates that quickly became a group of good friends. We were 18 years old. A lot of things happened in the school of architecture during those years but, especially, we were growing up together and it is perhaps because of this that the really important experiences took place during holidays -summer or winter- a time in which we travelled together, sketchbooks under our arms, cameras hanging over the shoulder, and a compass pointing to the works of the great masters. However, the trips I remember today with a wider smile are not the magnificent ones to discover Le Corbusier, Borromini, Mies or Wright, but the modest trips we made to follow Jaume's proposal to discover the landscapes of his native island. Since then, for me, the landscapes of Mallorca are landscapes of friendship, because over there, there is something more than the houses of the masters, there are houses of friends.

Long before Irene and Jaume built anything there, we tasted the flavors of Mallorca and explored every corner. We talked a lot about architecture, of course. From the first stays on the island, Jaume took us from Can Lis to Ciudad Blanca, from the Miró Foundation to the walls under the Cathedral, from the Son Pou cave to the Galdent quarry. Over the years, and following his car, we drove hundreds of miles discovering houses, buildings, lost villages, or anonymous constructions of farmers and fishermen. But in fact, to get to where we really connected with the island, we didn't have to move at all. *Sa Caseta* was the small country house on the outskirts of Montuïri that we borrowed from Jaume's parents when we were there. A few years later, when Irene and Jaume left Barcelona to go to Mallorca together, they lived there for some years. It was in *Sa Caseta* that their first projects were conceived. Drawings and models were stacked in the small space under the roof that they used as a studio. When, from time to time, we arrived to invade them for a few days, it was the place where we left our backpacks.

Sa caseta was not just a small country house with its own rooms to live in, it was, above all, a set of spaces -indoors and outdoors- gathered around the main volume of the house. Over here a porch, over there some benches near

a well, here a fig tree and next to it a striped reed shade, or a pond to refresh oneself when it was too hot... This was the splendid gift that Jaume and his parents gave us when we visited there; they allowed us to live together in that little paradise. I can perfectly remember many of the days we spent there. Long conversations under the porch, reading or drawing under the shade of a fruit tree, and meals, especially meals. Jaume's parents always gave us unforgettable lunches and dinners. Long tables were prepared -we used to be a lot of people- and delicious Mallorcan recipes waiting for the right moment to move from one dish to another. While Jaume's father had just roasted a sucking pig in the wood-fired oven and his mother was stirring fragrant pots, Irene and Jaume made sure nothing was missing on the table. At the end of the day, the long evenings were filled with hours of conversation and laughter in the company of the sunset's comforting breeze and darkening fields.

I recall a quotidian scene, simple, one that I always remember when thinking about the house for Jaime and Isabelle in Puntiró. And not only when I think about this house by Irene and Jaume, but also when I think about many of their works.

I remember one summer afternoon, during a long walk with them when they were designing the house. It was a few years ago. They passionately explained to me how they were working on the facades, on technical aspects, the hydraulic-tile pavements, or everything at once. They showed me some drawings. They told me everything I would later have the opportunity to see when I visited the site during the construction of the house. The degree of detail, of preparation, of precision was unusual, and I thought -I remember thinking about this clearly- that they were setting up another table, another magnificent table, and that they were doing it with the same dedication and generosity that I knew so well from the evenings in *Sa Caseta*.

It has always seemed to me that Irene and Jaume work on projects and supervise the construction in the same way and with the same intent with which they prepare those unforgettable dinners for their friends, and that they do this in a completely natural way; it is what they have seen doing all their life.

For them, to design and building a house, is -or at least I think so- to prepare the ground thoroughly so that, later, it is possible that the pulse of life beats hard. They know that the important thing is that life, much more than the house as an object. The house is only important if it makes things easier to happen and if it does it in appropriate conditions. Yes, organizing a sequence of spaces and shaping them with a precise and beautiful combination of

materials is important, but also understanding that this will never be the ultimate purpose of their work.

In Jaime and Isabelle's home, all the material and spatial wonder that you can enjoy through this magnificent photographic report is not the ultimate goal of the architects. You can be sure; at the origin of the project, long before worrying about material aspects, long before choosing the bricks that would be used to give the warm texture of the central courtyard or to make a model of the windows that are pouring into it, they imagined, at the very center, a large standing table surrounded by chairs, ready for Jaime and Isabelle to sit with their family and friends, chatting and laughing for hours in the comforting fresh air of Mallorca's sunsets.